

Across America, libraries have for many years been fixtures in our communities, where they serve as both centers for the pursuit of learning and gathering places for the exchange of news and ideas.

While the difficult economic times have posed challenges for many libraries across our nation, there are creative avenues of support for these important community institutions. With the assistance of the Library of Congress, for example, your local library, or school library, can diversify its book collection for free and enhance children's learning in the process.

The Library of Congress conducts a unique book donation program that helps educational institutions and certain nonprofit tax-exempt organizations build their library collections and introduce children to a greater variety of books. As the world's largest repository of books and other texts, the Library of Congress possesses more than 130 million items. It receives approximately 20,000 items each day, of which only half is catalogued for the library's own permanent collection.

These remaining items are given to the Library of Congress Surplus Books Program, which is comprised of a variety of books, audio and visual cassettes, and some maps. Most of these materials are meant for secondary and higher education levels, but there are often items appropriate for elementary school-aged children as well. Stock changes frequently as books are received and donated daily, but there is always an assortment of thousands of fiction and nonfiction items on the humanities, history, area studies, social sciences, education, science, and foreign languages.

To learn more, non-profit, educational, and government institutions and organizations wishing to participate in the Library of Congress Surplus Books Program should contact my Washington, D.C. office at 202.225.4806. I encourage anyone interested in this unique and wonderful program to take advantage of it today.